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ABSTRACT

A survey of the Moorpark College (California) faculty was conducted to determine their preferences in relation to early semester calendars that would permit the completion of final examinations before the Christmas vacation. The survey asked for a response to the calendar in use and to two alternative plans: Plan A--an early semester academic calendar beginning August 19 and ending May 30, and Plan B--an early semester academic calendar beginning August 29 and ending May 31, which allows Saturdays to be counted. Results of the survey showed that 50 percent of the faculty preferred Plan B, and that both Plans A and B were supported by 87-91 percent. Appendixes provide the survey instrument and the proposed academic calendars. (DB)

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A STUDY TO DETERMINE ADOPTING AN EARLY SEMESTER CALENDAR AT VENTURA COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

EDUCATIONAL POLICY SYSTEMS

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A PRACTICUM PRESENTED TO NOVA UNIVERSITY
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I. TITLE

A study to determine adopting an early semester calendar at the Ventura Community College District.

II. INTRODUCTION

In recent years a growing number of districts have redrawn their school calendars. At Moorpark College the two-semester plan has been criticized by faculty, students and administrators as in need of investigation. The State law requires 175 days of instruction with little deviation for innovating alternative calendars.

All of the local transfer colleges and universities are either on an early semester or quarterly calendar which presently creates confusion and delay with our mid-year graduates. They are not permitted to attend immediately, but must wait four to five weeks before continuing with educational plans. There is also a three and one-half week "lame duck" session following the Christmas vacation before finals take place. This delay often created dropouts and wasted motion.

The Board of the Ventura Community College District had little information to respond to the present problem. There was a clear need to document fully the efficiency of an early Semester Calendar and present the information to the District Superintendent and the Board for consideration.

A review of the literature indicated an impressive number of California State colleges had adopted some form of early semester plan. There are presently ninety-eight Community Colleges(4) that

must be on the traditional semester plan. In a national survey receiving 2,475 responses,(5) 49.5% were currently using the early semester calendar and 20% more were considering its adoption.

According to Title t, California Administrative Code(2), the Standards for Compliance with 175 days of attendance are as follows:

54420. Authority. As required in Chapter 17551 of the Education Code, "The Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges shall establish standards to determine whether the districts within its jurisdiction have maintained the regular day schools of the district for at least 175 days during the next preceding fiscal year."

54221. Definition of 175 Days. This shall include only Monday through Saturday for two semesters, three quarters and/or other sessions as are needed to total 175 days, exclusive of days associated with summer session and all legal holidays.

54222. Definition of Sessions. The 175 days shall be divided into sessions as described in Education Code Sections 25511.5, 25515.5, and Administrative Code Title 5 Section 55201 and such other sessions that may be combined with the semester or quarter sessions to total 175 days.

Background

The Education Code defines "academic year" for regular day Community Colleges as that portion of the school year during which the college is maintained for not less than the minimum number of teaching days required for state apportionments, elsewhere defined as 175 days. This requirement was reviewed as follows by the Board of Governors:(1)

(a) is based on K-12 standards,

(b) is not in force for other segments of higher education,

(c) required Community College students to attend class at least two weeks longer per academic

year to earn the same units of credit as comparable students in four-year institutions.

(d) may put many Community College students at a disadvantage in the labor market because of the longer academic year, and

(e) reduced the potential for innovative academic scheduling.

III. PROCEDURE

This study gained opinions of the Moorpark College faculty through a survey (Appendix A) ascertaining preferences of semester calendars. A presentation before the District Council was made wherein the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, College Presidents, and faculty senate officers discussed the merits and liabilities of the proposals offered. Four special meetings were held at Moorpark College to present alternative calendars for faculty consideration. These meetings were held throughout the month of January, 1974.

The District Council was also kept informed of the study and the members were instrumental in offering suggestions for further investigation.

IV. EXPECTATIONS

It was anticipated that a decision affecting institutional policy would be made relative to maintaining or changing the present calendar for the 1975-76 school year. The survey also served to augment current statewide efforts in exploring this 175 day requirement of the California Education Code.

V. DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions apply:

District Council - Composed of Faculty Chairman, elected faculty members, Presidents of each college and Superintendent of the Ventura Community College District. This Council meets twice monthly and directly influences policy.

Early Semester - College year divided into two semesters, usually the first semester slightly shorter than the second. The first semester starts about August 30 and ends about December 21; the second semester starting about January 15 and ending about May 20. Semester hours are used for credits.

4-1-4 - The college year is divided into two equal terms of about 16 weeks each plus a 4-week term between the two. The first term ends just before Christmas. The second term starts February 1. The month of January is used for the 4-week session, called by several names--interterm, interim, winter session, etc. (Interim is probably the most common name.) The 4-1-4 title means 4 months, 1 month, 4 months. 4-1-4 also means 4 courses, 1 course, 4 courses. The unit is used for credits. All courses are the same credit value; a full load is 4 courses. In the interim only one course is studied.

Quarter - College year divided into three equal parts of about 12 weeks each, with a great variation about the starting and ending times. Quarter hours are used for credits. (Three quarter hours equal two semester hours.)

Traditional Semester - College year divided into two equal semesters. The first semester starting about the 10th of September and ending about the 25th of January; the second semester starting about January 30 and ending early in June. Semester hours are used for credits.

VI. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

Legal Constraints Section 17551 of the Education Code requires that the Community College academic year consist of at least 175 days. Community Colleges are allowed to use up to 6 of the 175 for registration purposes, leaving 169 days of instruction. The Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges have not allowed Saturdays to be counted towards meeting the 175-day requirement. The 175 days are based on the idea of 35 five-day weeks (5 x 35 = 175). If the year were equally divided, each semester would consist of 17 1/2 weeks of instruction, less 3 days for registration, or nearly 17 5-day weeks of classroom instruction.

Section 25518.5 of the Education Code defines a credit hour as follows: Credit Hour Defined: Allowance for Shorter Term

25518.5. One credit hour of junior college work is approximately three hours of recitation, study, or laboratory work per week throughout a term of 16 weeks. Where a term is more or less than 16 weeks more or less than one credit hour shall be allowed in the same ration that the length of the term is to 16 weeks.

(Added by Stats. 1963, Ch. 100).

Legal Inconsistency This code section reflects the Higher Education model of the Carnegie unit which is based on a 16-week term. Two semesters of 16 five-day weeks equals 160 days of instruction (2 x 16 x 5 = 160). The 175-day standard is based on the K-12 model which results in a 9-day discrepancy in the two code sections (169 - 160 = 9).

Careful reading of section 25518.5 shows that a student is only receiving 16 weeks of credit for a 17-week course. Our students should be receiving 1/16 more of a unit of credit for every unit of credit currently received. For example, a student with 64 units of credit in our district should receive 4 more units (1/16 x 64 =) or 68 units. We are not in compliance with the letter of the law, at student expense.

Further inconsistencies exist with our "equal partners" in higher education. The State Universities are required to have 165 days of instruction. The University of California is required to have 161 days of instruction.

California State University at Northridge (CSUN) is on the early semester calendar for the 1973-74 academic year. (See Appendix C). During the fall semester, their staff was on campus 77 days of which 4 days were spent in advisement, orientation, registration, and class preparation, leaving 73 days (14.6 weeks) of instruction (including 5 days of finals plus 2 days for review class periods and faculty conferences.) Our fall schedule shows 88 days less 3 days for registration or 85 days (17 weeks) of classroom instruction. This represents 12 days or 2.4 weeks more instruction in our district during the fall semester.

During the spring semester at California State University at Northridge, the staff will be on campus 85 days of which 5 days will be spent in advertisement, orientation, registration, and class preparation, leaving 80 days (16 weeks) for classroom instruction (including 6 days for finals plus 2 days for review class periods and faculty conferences.) Our spring schedule shows 88 days less 2 days for registration or 86 days (17.2 weeks) of classroom instruction. During the spring semester our students will receive 6 more days or 1.2 more weeks of instruction. For the academic year, our students will be required to attend at least 18 days or 3.6 weeks longer than their peers at CSUN. Our longer year puts us at a real disadvantage to compete with CSUN for academically talented students. As far as our calendar is concerned, "Moorpark College is just like high school."

Other Constraints Any proposed change in our calendar must consider our relationship with K-12 and segments of higher education. In particular, our Spring semester should ideally begin after mid-year high school graduates have graduated. (Currently, this would be the first week in February.) Our summer sessions should begin after high school seniors have graduated. (This currently occurs in mid-June.) Furthermore, our students should be able to enter the winter quarter (January) universities. (Our traditional semester has them wait until the spring quarter beginning in April).

The survey asked for a response to the present calendar and to two alternative proposals:

Plan A Plan A (August 19 - December 20, January 15 - May 30) is an early semester academic calendar which assumes that there is no

change in the laws which constrains us to K-12, 175-day requirement. These plans plus several other related documents were presented at the District Council meeting. (Appendix D).

Primary Advantages of Plan A

1. The most obvious benefit of Plan A is the elimination of the "lame duck," sometimes called "useless" 4-week session of classes that follow the Christmas vacation. The fall semester is more compact, less fatiguing, more efficient. Drop rate expected to decline.

2. Eliminates the slowdown of student performance which inevitably preceeds a long vacation. Unrealized holiday study plans produces anxiety and students drop out.

3. It allows our transfer students and faculty members on leave to enter the State University or U.C. system's winter quarters or spring semesters beginning in early January.

4. The students, faculty, administration, and staff will be better prepared to begin the spring semester after a 3 1/2 week semester break.

5. This may lead to a 3-week instructional mini-session that would be optional to students and faculty.

6. The semester break does meet some of the needs of the energy crisis, conserving fuel and energy during the coldest times of the year. (A more significant factor for colder regions in U.S.)

7. The semester break provides students with job opportunities during the holiday and post holiday business season.

8. The semester break will facilitate records, grade processing, registration, student counseling, faculty and administrative planning.

9. The semester break allows the student homemaker 2 weeks to get caught up on household chores without children underfoot, since K-12 resumes on January 2.

10. The spring semester ending early allows students to compete for summer jobs with other early semester (the most popular higher education academic calendar) students.

11. The traditional Easter vacation week is retained to facilitate family life.

12. Permits a winter vacation for students and faculty.

13. Allows non-traditional vacation in May.

Primary Disadvantages of Plan A Assuming that K-12 Does Not Adopt an Early Semester Calendar:

1. Plan A calls for students and staff to be on campus 4 weeks before K-12 instruction begins.

2. Any students with school age children might be unable to attend due to child-care needs.

Plan B Plan B (August 29-December 21, January 30-May 31) is an early semester academic calendar (or a 4-1-4 calendar with a possible noncontractural, optional intersession) which assumes a change in the 175-day law to allow Saturdays to be counted, but retains the 16-week semester calendar required by existing law. (Appendix E).

Its makeup compares more favorably with the California State University at Northridge early semester calendar than Plan A.

VII. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DATA

The Moorpark College Faculty completed the survey on February 4, 1974. The results are an overwhelming demonstration of faculty concern over the present calendar (Appendix B). The proposed change in calendar met with 96% approval. There were mixed reactions concerning the separation from the K-12 pattern, the notion of counting Saturdays toward the 175 day rule, and the number of weeks desired between semesters.

Plan B was favored by over 50% of the faculty at Moorpark College. Both Plan A and Plan B met with 87-91% support. The preference to complete the semester before Christmas met with an 88% favorable

response even in the absence of support by lower education (K-12).

In a section entitled "Additional Comments", the sampling points toward a widespread mandate for change.

INSTITUTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

The results of the study have encouraged current efforts at the District level to carefully examine alternate calendars for 1975-76. The faculty at Moorpark College, the students, and the Administration have joined into the decision making which augurs well for the educational setting.

Recent communication on the state level has resulted in the Chancellor's office inviting this writer to Sacramento, California to present the findings of the report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) The faculty should reconsider choices regarding the present calendar on an early semester plan with an intersession following Christmas. The calendar to effect the 1975-76 school year.

(2) The off-campus program should be based on the traditional calendar with the possibility of the on-campus program to test the early semester plan.

(3) In a multi-college district, Moorpark College should be permitted to test the early semester concept.

(4) Seek special legislation statewide to change the 175-day rule to coincide with the State Colleges and Universities 165-day plan.

(5) Shorten summer school to 10 weeks, rather than 12 weeks permitting the flexibility to begin the fall semester in late August.

(6) Get the Ventura County Schools to accept an early semester calendar for the entire district.

Ballots will be collected Tuesday morning (2/3) for afternoon District Council meeting in Ventura.

1. Do you agree with the spirit involved in adopting an early semester or 4-1-4 calendar?

   yes___ no___ indifferent___

2. Rate the following under the possible condition listed below:

   Scale: 1-most preferred 2-next preferred 3-least preferred

   A. Assume K-12 doesn't go along with early calendar but Board of Governors accepts Saturdays:

      Plan A___ Plan B___ Present Calendar___

   B. Assume K-12 does agree to similar early calendar and Board of Governors accepts Saturdays:

      Plan A___ Plan B___ Present Calendar___

   If Plan B is impossible due to the Board of Governors not accepting Saturdays rate the following:

   Scale: 1-most favorable 2-next favorable

   C. Assume K-12 doesn't go along:

      Plan A___ Present Calendar___

   D. Assume K-12 does go along:

      Plan A___ Present Calendar___

3. What is the ideal semester break (including holidays) between the last day of finals in the Fall and the first day of instruction in the Spring? Circle one:

   2 weeks 3 weeks 4 weeks 5 weeks 6 weeks 7 weeks

4. Should the semester break be used for an optional instructional session if time permits?

   yes___ no___ indifferent___

Additional Comments?_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

MOORPARK COLLEGE FACULTY SENATE

EARLY SEMESTER BALLOT

TABULATED FEBRUARY 4, 1974

*M=46 1. Do you agree with the spirit involved in adopting an early semester or 4-1-4 calendar?

yes 44 (96%) no 2 (4%) indifferent 0 (0%)

*Due to ambiguity of this question, faculty was instructed to ignor it or use alternate ballot.

2. Rate the following under the possible condition listed below:

Scale: 1-most preferred 2-next preferred 3-least preferred

M=71 A. Assume K-12 doesn't go along with early calendar but Board of Governors accepts Saturdays:

Plan A 25 (35%) Plan B 37 (52%) Present calendar 9 (13%)

M=71 B. Assume K-12 does agree to similar early calendar and Board of Governors accepts Saturdays:

Plan A 28 (39%) Plan B 37 (52%) Present Calendar 6 (9%)

If Plan B is impossible due to the Board of Governors not accepting Saturdays rate the following:

Scale: 1-most favorable 2-next favorable

M=69 C. Assume K-12 doesn't go along:

Plan A 54 (78%) Present Calendar 15 (22%)

M=68 D. Assume K-12 does go along:

Plan A 60 (88%) Present Calendar 8 (12%)

M=70 3. What is the ideal semester break (including holidays) between the last day of finals in the Fall and the first day of instruction in the Spring? Circle One:

2 weeks - 3 weeks; 21 (30%) 4 weeks - 5 weeks; 35 (50%) 6 weeks - 7 weeks 14 (20%)

M=70 4. Should the semester break be used for an optional instructional session if time permits?

yes 34 (49%) no 16 (23%) indifferent 20 (28%)

In response to a faculty questionnaire and after consultation with the School Deans, the following early semester academic calendar for 1974-75 was submitted to the Chancellor's Office and has been approved. A tabulation of the responses to the faculty questionnaire also appears below. The administration will seek faculty opinion again in the fall semester to help determine whether the University should continue on the early semester calendar.

Fall 1974

Aug. 30	Friday	Academic Year begins. Orientation, Advisement Registration Week begins.
Sept. 2	Monday	Labor Day. All offices closed.
Sept. 3-5	Tues., Wed. Thurs.	Registration Week.
Sept. 6-7	Fri., Sat.	Student conferences.
Sept. 9	Monday	Instruction begins.
Nov. 28-29	Thurs., Fri.	Thanksgiving Recess.
Dec. 12-13	Thurs., Fri.	Optional review days. Last days of instruction.
Dec. 16-21	Mon. - Sat.	Final examinations.
Decl 23 - January 10		Winter Recess
Jan. 13-14	Mon. - Tues.	Student conferences and evaluation.
Jan. 15	Wednesday	Grades due. Last day of Fall Semester.

Spring 1975

Jan. 20	Monday	Academic Semester begins.
Jan. 20-23	Monday-Thurs.	Orientation, Advisement, Registration Week.
Jan. 24-25	Friday-Saturday	Student conferences.
Jan. 27	Monday	Instruction begins.
Feb.17	Monday	Washington's Birthday. All offices closed. No instruction.
Mar. 24-28	Monday-Friday	Spring Recess.
May 15-16	Thurs.-Friday	Optional review days. Last days of instruction.
May 19-24	Monday-Saturday	Final examinations.
May		Commencement--to be announced.
May 26	Monday	Memorial Day. All offices closed. No instruction.
May 27-29	Tues.-Thurs.	Student conferences and evaluation.
May 30	Friday	Grades due. Last day of Academic Year.

FACULTY RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE EARLY SEMESTER CALENDAR, 1973-74

	The Arts	Bus.	C.A.P.S.	Educ.	Engr.	Hum.	Sci/Math	Social & Beh. Sci	Total 406
1. Decidedly in favor	35	38	59	17	7	20	29	56	261
2. Moderately in favor	1	3	8	7	1	6	13	12	51
3. Slightly in favor	1	1	1	1	1	-	2	2	9
4. Neutral	1	1	1	-	1	1	1	2	8
5. Slightly opposed	1	-	1	1	-	1	-	4	8
6. Moderately opposed	1	2	1	3	1	1	2	4	15
7. Decidedly opposed	5	2	7	8	1	5	11	15	54

PLAN A

PROPOSED ACADEMIC CALENDAR
1974-75

					DAYS Calendar	DAYS Instruction		
1	August 5 6 7 8 9	12 13 14 15 16	(19) (20) 21 22 23	26 27 28 29 30	10	10	8/21	Instruction Begins
2	September [2] 3 4 5 6	[9] 10 11 12 13	16 17 18 19 20	23 24 25 26 27	20	18	9/2 9/9	Labor Day Admission Day
3	October 30 1 2 3 4	7 8 9 10 11	14 15 16 17 18	21 22 23 24 25	20	20		
4	28 29 30 31 1	November 4 5 6 7 8	[11] 12 13 14 15	18 19 20 21 22	20	19	11/11	Veteran's Day
5	25 26 27 [28] [29]	December 2 3 4 5 6	9 10 11 12 13	16 17 18 19 20	20	18	11/28-29	Thanksgiving
6	23 24 25 26 27	30 31 [1] 2 3	January 6 7 8 9 10	13 14 (15) (16) (17)	(85) days 20	3	12/20-	End of Fall Semester
7	20 21 22 23 24	27 28 29 30 31	February 3 4 5 6 7	10 11 [12] 13 14	20	19	1/20 2/12	Instruction Lincoln
8	[17] 18 19 20 21	[24 25 26 27 28]	March 3 4 5 6 7	10 11 12 13 14	20	19	2/17	Washington
9	17 18 19 20 21	24 25 26 27 28	April 31 1 2 3 4	7 8 9 10 11	20	15	3/24-28	Easter Break
10	14 15 16 17 18	21 22 23 24 25	May 28 29 30 1 2	5 6 7 8 9	20	20		
11	12 13 14 15 16	19 20 21 22 23	26 27 28 29 30	June 2 3 4 5 6	16	14	5/26 5/30	Memorial Day End of Semester
12	9 10 11 12 13	16 17 18 19 20	23 24 25 26 27	July 30 1 2 3 [4]	(90) days		6/23	Summer Session Begins
13	7 8 9 10 11	14 15 16 17 18	21 22 23 24 25	August 28 29 30 31 1				
1	4 5 6 7 8	11 12 13 14 15	(18) (19) 20 21 22	25 26 27 28 29				
2	September 1 2 3 4 5	8 9 10 11 12	15 16 17 18 19	22 23 24 25 26				
3	October 29 30 1 2 3	6 7 8 9 10	13 14 15 16 17	20 21 22 23 24				
4	27 28 29 30 31	November 3 4 5 6 7	10 11 12 13 14	17 18 19 20 21				
5	24 25 26 27 28	December 1 2 3 4 5	8 9 10 11 12	15 16 17 18 19				
6	22 23 24 25 26	29 30 31 1 2	January 5 6 7 8 9	12 13 14 15 16				
7	19 20 21 22 23	26 27 28 29 30	February 2 3 4 5 6	9 10 11 12 13				
8	16 17 18 19 20	23 24 25 26 27	March 1 2 3 4 5	8 9 10 11 12				

0 - Registration and Staff on Campus

/7/ - Classes Not in Session

——— - Finals

Plan B

*PROPOSED EARLY SEMESTER ACADEMIC CALENDAR -- University (Carnegie Unit) Type
1974-75

*Contingent upon Board of Governors' Action, February 21,

					DAYS Calendar	DAYS Instruction	
1	August 5 6 7 8 9 10	12 13 14 15 16 17	19 20 21 22 23 24	26 27 28 (29) (30) (31)	3	3	9/3 Instruction Begins
2	September [2] 3 4 5 6 7	[9] 10 11 12 13 14	16 17 18 19 20 21	23 24 25 26 27 28	24	22	
3	October 30 1 2 3 4 5	7 8 9 10 11 12	14 15 16 17 18 19	21 22 23 24 25 26	24	24	
4	November 28 29 31 1 2 3	4 5 6 7 8 9	[11] 12 13 14 15 16	18 19 20 21 22 23	24	23	
5	25 26 27 [28] [29] [30]	December 2 3 4 5 6 7	9 10 11 12 13 14	16 17 18 19 20 21	24 / 99	21 / 93	
6	23 24 25 26 27 28	30 31 1 2 3 4	January 6 7 8 9 10 11	13 14 15 16 17 18		14	1/2-1/29 Intersession
7	20 21 22 23 24 25	27 28 29 (30) (31) (1)	February 3 4 5 6 7 8	10 11 12 13 14 15	15	14	2/3 Instruction Begins
8	[17] 18 19 20 21 22	24 25 26 27 28 1	March 3 4 5 6 7 8	10 11 12 13 14 15	24	23	
9	17 18 19 20 21 22	[24] [25] [26] [27] [28] [29]	April 31 1 2 3 4 5	7 8 9 10 11 12	24	18	
10	14 15 16 17 18 19	21 22 23 24 25 26	28 29 30 May 1 2 3	5 6 7 8 9 10	24	24	
11	12 13 14 15 16 17	19 20 21 22 23 24	[26] 27 28 29 30 31	June 2 3 4 5 6 7	18	17	
12	9 10 11 12 13 14	16 17 18 19 20 21	23 24 25 26 27 28	July 30 1 2 3 4 5	105	96	6/2 - 8/27 12.5 week Summer Session
13	7 8 9 10 11 12	14 15 16 17 18 19	21 22 23 24 25 26	August 28 29 30 31 1			
1	4 5 6 7 8 9	11 12 13 14 15 16	18 19 20 21 22 23	25 26 27 (28) (29) (30)			
2	September [1] 2 3 4 5 6	[8] 9 10 11 12 13	15 16 17 18 19 20	22 23 24 25 26 27			Instruction 9/2 Begins
3	October 29 30 1 2 3 4	6 7 8 9 10 11	13 14 15 16 17 18	20 21 22 23 24 25	0		Registration and Staff on Campu
4	27 28 29 30 31 1	November 3 4 5 6 7 8	10 11 12 13 14 15	17 18 19 20 21 22			
5	24 25 26 27 28 29	December 1 2 3 4 5 6	8 9 10 11 12 13	15 16 17 18 19 20	/7		Classes not in Session
6	22 23 24 25 26 27	29 30 31 January 1 2 3	5 6 7 8 9 10	12 13 14 15 16 17			
7	19 20 21 22 23 24	26 27 28 29 30 31	February 2 3 4 5 6 7	9 10 11 12 13 14	———		Finals
8	16 17 18 19 21 22	23 24 25 26 27 28	March 1 2 3 4 5 6	8 9 10 11 12 13			

15/16/17

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
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AUG 30 1974

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